



NEWS

Families celebrate opening of the 'crown jewel' of Newport Beach library campuses



Library Services Director Rebecca Lightfoot, right, hands Newport Beach resident Susan Braithwaite an open house giveaway Witte Hall tote bag Saturday during the family day celebration of the auditorium's opening. (Susan Hoffman)

By Susan Hoffman

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Visitors of all ages flocked to the grand opening of the \$23.4-million Witte Hall at the Newport Beach Central Library Saturday afternoon as part of a public event.

Parking was at a premium as the visitors scrambled for one of the prime 150 parking spots in front of the library and Witte Hall before heading to the civic center parking garage.



Tracy Kiggen of Artovator applies finishing face-painting touches to a 3-year-old Irvine girl named Emily during the Witte Hall open house celebration Saturday at the Stahr Courtyard. (Susan Hoffman)

According to Jerold Kappel, chief executive of the Library Foundation of Newport Beach, there were 575 visitors for the Saturday afternoon open house celebration.

“Today we are all celebrating the long-awaited, much anticipated opening of Witte Hall,” said Rebecca Lightfoot, the library services manager who was manning the Newport Beach Public Library booth. “We have a family fun celebration for all ages like the butterfly garden experience, Chuck Jones art activities, face painting, a Mr. Bubbles special reading, a magician and music.”



Newport Beach resident Trevor Gladych poses with his kids, Elly, left, and M.J. during the family day at Witte Hall on Saturday. (Susan Hoffman)

Hundreds of adults and children filled the Stahr Courtyard, standing in lines to place requests for a favorite animal or figure at the balloon-twisting booth, or to test out a face-painting artist's skill at a tent set aside for that activity.

Across the way was an enclosed butterfly garden where kids and parents could step inside the exhibit for a close-up experience. Before entering, guests were advised to take care not to step on any live butterflies.



Jonathan Kim takes a photo of son, Jamey, 3, holding a butterfly during Witte Hall's opening weekend festivities. (Susan Hoffman)

Tustin resident Jonathan Kim supervised his two young sons, Jamey 3, and 5-year-old Pacey as they carefully picked up the butterflies, holding them on specially-designated sticks.

Susan Braithwaite of Newport Beach brought her son along to experience the variety of activities. “I’m looking forward to the fun speaker series and other family events,” she said.



Families enjoyed the butterfly exhibit tent during Saturday’s opening of Witte Hall. (Susan Hoffman)

“I think it was a wonderful experience for opening the crown jewel of the library campuses,” said Newport Beach resident Trevor Gladych.

“Special thanks to everybody that made this possible.”

City departments including Recreation and Senior Services, Public Works and Newport Beach Public Library hosted assorted activities and also gave away canvas Witte Hall tote bags as a welcome gift to attendees.



Kids create Play-Doh sculptures in the shade of a canopy Saturday during the Witte Hall family open house. (Susan Hoffman)

The [official ribbon-cutting for Witte Hall was held Thursday](#), followed by a major donor party on Friday night.

Susan Hoffman

Susan Hoffman is a contributor to Times Community News.

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